



Now what do people know about global climate change? Survey studies of educated laypeople

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Abstract:

In 1992, a mental-models-based survey in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, revealed that educated laypeople often conflated global climate change and stratospheric ozone depletion, and appeared relatively unaware of the role of anthropogenic carbon dioxide emissions in global warming. This study compares those survey results with 2009 data from a sample of similarly well-educated laypeople responding to the same survey instrument. Not surprisingly, following a decade of exPLoSive attention to climate change in politics and in the mainstream media, survey respondents in 2009 showed higher awareness and comprehension of some climate change causes. Most notably, unlike those in 1992, 2009 respondents rarely mentioned ozone depletion as a cause of global warming. They were also far more likely to correctly volunteer energy use as a major cause of climate change; many in 2009 also cited natural processes and historical climatic cycles as key causes. When asked how to address the problem of climate change, while respondents in 1992 were unable to differentiate between general "good environmental practices" and actions specific to addressing climate change, respondents in 2009 have begun to appreciate the differences. Despite this, many individuals in 2009 still had incorrect beliefs about climate change, and still did not appear to fully appreciate key facts such as that global warming is primarily due to increased concentrations of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, and the single most important source of this carbon dioxide is the combustion of fossil fuels.

Source: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1539-6924.2010.01448.x>

Resource Description

Communication:

resource focus on research or methods on how to communicate or frame issues on climate change; surveys of attitudes, knowledge, beliefs about climate change

A focus of content

Communication Audience:

audience to whom the resource is directed

Public

Other Communication Audience: Media



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Exposure :

weather or climate related pathway by which climate change affects health

Air Pollution, Ecosystem Changes, Extreme Weather Event, Food/Water Quality, Food/Water Security, Human Conflict/Displacement, Human Conflict/Displacement, Meteorological Factors, Precipitation, Sea Level Rise, Solar Radiation, Temperature, Unspecified Exposure

Air Pollution: Particulate Matter

Extreme Weather Event: Flooding, Hurricanes/Cyclones

Food/Water Quality: Other Water Quality Issue

Water Quality (other): Ocean temperature

Food/Water Security: Agricultural Productivity

Temperature: Extreme Heat, Fluctuations

Geographic Feature:

resource focuses on specific type of geography

None or Unspecified

Geographic Location:

resource focuses on specific location

United States

Health Impact:

specification of health effect or disease related to climate change exposure

General Health Impact

Mitigation/Adaptation:

mitigation or adaptation strategy is a focus of resource

Mitigation

Model/Methodology:

type of model used or methodology development is a focus of resource

Exposure Change Prediction, Other Projection Model/Methodology

Other Projection Model/Methodology: Public perception of future temperatures

Population of Concern: A focus of content

Other Vulnerable Population: People with low access to education

Resource Type:

format or standard characteristic of resource

Research Article

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Timescale: ☒

time period studied

Medium-Term (10-50 years)